

# Converse County, Wyoming

## TOUR 23 Report

TOUR 23/  
Week Five

May 15, 2015



**Attendance: 33**

- 14 - Private sector
- 5 - Elected officials
- 6 - Government
- 2 - Non-profit
- 2 - Education
- 4 - Staff facilitators

**Location:**

*Eastern Wyoming  
Community College,  
Douglas*

**Major Sponsors:** *Black Hills Corporation, Black Hills Energy WY, Black Hills Power, Blair Holiday Inns-Cody and Riverton, First Interstate Bank, Hilltop National Bank, Little America Hotel & Resort, Rocky Mountain Power, Silver Star Communications, Spradley Barr Motors, Timberline Hospitality, Tronox, University of Wyoming, Wyoming Business Alliance, Wyoming Business Council and the Wyoming Banker's Association.*

**Local Sponsors:**

*Eastern Wyoming Community College-Douglas and Community Builders Inc.*

**County Coordinator:**

*Joe Coyne*

**Local Economic Development Organizations:**

*Glenrock Economic Development Corporation, Glenrock Chamber of Commerce and CANDO  
(Converse Area New Development Organization)*

# Converse County Introduction

Dr. Anne Alexander summarized the overall global, national, and state economic framework. She noted that while there have been significant headwinds in the global economy, the US has mostly recovered from the Great Recession and financial crisis of 2008. She also noted that the Wyoming economy had been buffered against national economic events by healthy employment creation in the state's energy economy. Moving forward, however, she predicted a slowing energy economy with flat to falling market prices and demand for oil, natural gas, and coal. This will present economic challenges ahead for Wyoming.

Converse County is an eastern Wyoming county with a largely flat population since 2010. Of the county's 14,000 residents, 35% of them are either under 18 or over 65.

92% of people 25 and over in Converse County have at least a high school diploma and almost 20% have a bachelor's degree or higher. Both of these are slightly lower than the state averages. Only 8.6% of the county's residents live below the poverty line, which beats the state's 11.5% poverty level. Converse county's median household income is \$6,000 higher than that of the rest of the state.

And 6% more of the county's residents own their homes than across the state.





# State and County Hallmarks

Participants were asked to identify state and local hallmarks for three timeframes: 1890-1940; 1940-1990; and 1990-2015. Below is a visual of interests expressed. The size of the words reflects the number of times a particular hallmark was mentioned by participants.

## State

## Local

1890 -

Fort/Trail System  
Agriculture  
National Parks and Monuments  
Railroad  
Statehood  
Oil Boom  
Women's Suffrage  
Western Heritage

Ag/Livestock  
Ranching  
Homesteading  
State Fair  
Railroad  
Hospital

1940 -

Missile Sites/F.E. Warren  
Boom-Bust Cycle  
Education Funding  
I-25  
Civilian Conservation Corps Work /Guernsey and Glendo  
Reservoirs/Dams

Jackslope Square/Improved Fairground Entrance  
Tourism Medical Personnel  
Small Business Development Center Developed  
Boom Bust  
Coal and Uranium Development  
Dave Johnston Power Plant  
Law Enforcement  
Eastern Wyoming College Campus  
Interstate Dynamics/Glenrock Bypassed  
POW Camps  
Expansion of Hospital

1990 -

Continued Lack of Income Tax  
Rise of Community Colleges in Workforce Development  
Trona  
CBM Boom/Bust Cycle  
Energy Development/Fracking  
Tech Advancements  
Energy Research and Education  
Growth in Tourism

Tourism - Historic, Cultural, Outdoor  
Processing of Oil and Gas  
Library  
Oil, Gas and Windfarm Development  
Local Investment - Library, College, Recreation Center  
Federal regulation Influence  
Eastern Wyoming College

# Economic Development

Participants at the Converse County session were asked in small groups, “what is economic development and is it essential?” To this end, they were asked to **1.)** discuss *the current situation* in Converse County; **2.)** share *key beliefs* that might move the county forward and **3.)** give some broader *observations on economic development*.

## 1. Current Situation

72% of the participants believed that the county is *moving ahead* economically.

28% of the remaining attendees felt that the area was *holding its own*.

None said that the area was *slipping*.

## 2. Key Beliefs

Tap into local knowledge/history of what works and what doesn't.

Public/private participation critical.

Everybody's job – buy-in all around. Public/private/all.

Quality of life impacts economic development.

Economic development cannot be done in isolation from community development.

Isolationism and “If it ain't broke...” mentality can't dominate as it hinders growth.

“Build it and they will come” mentality is not viable.

Economic development is complex, and a long term, slow process.

Economic development should focus on production of goods/commodities.

## 3. Economic Development Observations

Economic development has to mesh with community values.

Unified community leaders needed economic development and growth.

Transient versus permanent population.

Transients should be included to encourage to put down roots.

Need new generation of employed millennials to be more involved.

Large variability in local economic development groups, business, government in terms of talents and knowledge.

Public/private key – labor intensive juggling act.

# Sustainability Essentials: County Goals/Wish List

Participants were asked to talk about their **goals and/or wish list** for their county's economic future and set **measurable objectives** and **action steps** that would help achieve their goals. Additionally, at each county session, there was a general summary quote of the day.

## Quote of the Day

*"DURT - Delays, Uncertainty, Regulations, and Taxes."*

## County Goals/ Wish List

- 1.) Create communities people want to stay in.
- 2.) More assisted living for both communities (Douglas and Glenrock).
- 3.) Increased child care/day care.
- 4.) Access to better transportation corridor to bring people into Glenrock from I-25.
- 5.) Value added: agriculture and minerals.
- 6.) Maintain quality of life and housing stock.
- 7.) Become destination county to live in, especially for young people.
- 8.) Increase active participation of younger demographic in leadership positions.

## Measurable Objectives

- 1a.) Develop a checklist for what community offers: housing, jobs, training, recreation, etc.
  - 1b.) Promote what we have.
- 2a.) Complete assisted living feasibility studies in both communities.
  - 3a.) More day care/child care.
  - 3b.) Needs assessment has already been done.
- 3c.) The community needs to get the word out to increase public support.
  - 4a.) Make state land available for access/signage to Glenrock.
  - 4b.) Develop entrance corridor with public support and buy in.
- 5a.) Create legislative task force to examine incentives (statewide focus).
  - 5b.) Examine TIFF's as possible source of funding.
  - 5c.) Communicate value of this.

## Measurable Objectives

- 5d.) Convert oil to plastics.
- 6a.) Housing stock/shortage overall. Increase housing.
  - 7a.) More amenities.
  - 7b.) More housing.
  - 7c.) More women in leadership.
  - 7d.) More progressive views in government.
- 8a.) Recruit next generation into training and into organizations (Councils, boards, etc.).

## Action Steps

- 1a.) Community meetings with a purpose.
- 1b.) CANDO leadership program will be a good mechanism.
- 1c.) Promote community development by meeting younger demographic where they live.
  - 1d.) More regional planning and discussion across counties.
  - 1e.) Advisory Council – citizens – input into process/vision for county.
- 1f.) If meeting – purpose to be clear (same people who coordinate may not be those who set agenda). Direction and purpose.
  - 1g.) To solve a problem/tackle an issue, Richard Grant will take lead.
- 2a.) Committee of citizens committed to solutions on child care, assisted living, and other issues.
  - 2b.) Then involve public entity with plans and study.
  - 2c.) Public entity may know funding sources; involve private entities to recruit citizens and champions.
  - 2d.) Don't call it 'rec center', call it 'community center' – day care, some senior activities, etc. for broader appeal.
    - 5a.) Identify public and private champions.
    - 5b.) Entities coordinate funding and policies.
    - 5c.) Private developer or company like Nobel, DuPont, etc.
- 5d.) Expansion of existing CANDO feasibility study – regional comparison study.
  - 5e.) Legislative task force – TIFF and other incentives.
  - 5f.) Delays uncertainty, regulations, and taxes “DURT” – must decrease.

# **Summary: Reading Reality Truthfully**

*Observations from representatives of the Wyoming Business Alliance on the meeting and overall prospects for the county.*

Despite the defeat of the recreation center, there is renewed vigor to reach out, redefine, and broaden to a multi-use community center facility.

Unity in the community is somewhat evasive but is doable with a clear agenda and vision and community buy-in.

Converse County has wonderful natural assets—Natural Bridge, the North Platte River, river walk, the POW Camp (Camp Douglas/WW II), and Esterbrook/Laramie Peak.

There is county wide respect—minimal, if any, animosity between Douglas and Glenrock.

The value of livable communities and the county overall is quite apparent.

The school district and hospital are the community anchors; the new Eastern Wyoming Community College campus will become a community meeting event venue.

The interstate exits to Glenrock are an inhibitor to retail growth.

Housing—from low income to high and senior—has become a pressing problem in recent years because of the energy boom and other factors.

For many years, prominent community families have been active leaders—40 year board experience.

Explosive energy related growth is evident—housing, motels, and fast food restaurants on the Douglas perimeter but the downtown lacks vibrancy.

## **Editor:**

**Bill Schilling, President Wyoming Business Alliance**

**145 South Durbin Street, Suite 101**

**Casper, WY 82601**

**Phone: (307)577-8000 | Fax: (307)577-8003**

**E-mail: [wyba@wyomingbusinessalliance.com](mailto:wyba@wyomingbusinessalliance.com)**

## **Draft Review Committee:**

**Joe Coyne**

**Doug Frank**

**Mary Morgan**

**Cindy Porter**

**Ed Werner**

